

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ALGIER 00599 201652Z

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, AG

SUBJ: ALGERIAN RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT

REFS: (A) STATE 032609 (B) ALGIERS 0497 (C) ALGIERS 0519

1. SUMMARY. ALGERIA CONSIDERING CONSIDERABLE RAILWAY EXPANSION, INCLUDING POSSIBLE WORLD BANK CREDIT UTILIZATION. US FIRMS IN EXCELLENT POSITION TO COMPETE FOR ENGINEERING AND STUDIES, AND TO CONTINUE TO COMPETE FOR LOCOMOTIVES. OTHER ROLLING STOCK LESS LIKELY TO BE OBTAINED IN US. END SUMMARY.

2. AS FOLLOW-UP TO PRELIMINARY USINT RESPONSE (REFTEL C) TO DEPARTMENT INQUIRY (REFTEL A), EMBOFF AND FSL CALLED ON SNCFA (STATE RAILWAYS) DIRECTOR GENERAL SADDEK BEN HEHDJOUBA MARCH 19. HE CONFIRMED FORD, BACON AND DAVIS, INC. STUDY CONTRACT FOR UPGRADING ANNABA-OUENZA-DJEBEL ONK LINE (REFTEL C). SNCFA ALSO CONSIDERING DOUBLE-TRACKING ABOUT 80 KILOMETERS WEST FROM CONSTANTINE, AND MAJOR EXTENSIONS OF RAIL LINES (TOUGGOURT-GHARDAIA-HASSI MESSAOUD-ALTHOUGH THE MAP WOULD SEEM TO DICTATE TOUGGOURT-HASSI MESSAOUD WITH A SPUR TO GHARDAIA-, A POSSIBLE LINE FROM ORAN TO FAR SOUTHWESTERN ALGERIAN TO BRING IRON ORE TO WHAT MAY BECOME A NEW STEEL COMPLEX, AND A POSSIBLE NEW EAST-WEST MAIN LINE). SNCFA CONTINUES TO NEED MAIN LINE LOCOMOTIVES, FOR WHICH TENDER ALREADY ISSUED (REFTEL B), AND TENDEF WILL SOON BE ISSUED FOR RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF SWITCH ENGINES. THERE WILL ALSO BE NEED FOR FREIGHT CARS, BUT LOCAL ASSEMBLY WILL TAKE CARE OF MUCH OF NEEDS-AND, IN ANY CASE, BEN MEHDJOUBA SAID MOST US

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MANUFACTURERS SEEM UNINTERESTED IN SUPPLYING THE EUROPEAN-

STANDARD (SMALL) FREIGHT CARS WHICH ARE NEEDED. TENDER (REPORTED SEPTEL AS TRADE OP.) JUST ISSUED FOR ECONOMY CLASS SHORT-AND MEDIUM-HAUL PASSENGER CARS; BEN MEHDJOUBA SAID HIS EARLIER EXPERIENCE IS US BACKLOGS TOO LARGE FOR MANUFACTURERS TO BE INTERESTED IN BIDDING. USINT GUESSES US MAY BE UNCOMPETITIVE IS THIS TYPE CAR.

3. SNCFA HAS CONTINUING NEEDS FOR MORE GENERAL EQUIPMENT, E.G. CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY. TENDERS ISSUED FROM TIME TO TIME; USINT REPORTS AS T. O.'S WHEN APPROPRIATE.

4. EXTENT OF SNCFA EXPANSION CONTINGENT UPON FINAL VERSION OF STILL-UNPUBLISHED 1974-77 FOUR-YEAR PLAN, BUT SOME EXPANSION IS FOREGONE CONCLUSION. CREDIT BEING SOUGHT INTER ALIA FROM WORLD BANK, BUT IF UNAVAILABLE THERE PLANS WILL STILL GO AHEAD.

5. BEN MEHDJOUBA EXPLICITLY INTERESTED IN US STUDY AND ENGINEERING FIRMS AS POTENTIAL CONTRACTORS, AND ASKED USINT PROVIDE ASAP LIST OF QUALIFIED FIRMS WITH SPECIFIC RAILWAY EXPERIENCE, SINCE INVITATIONS TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS WILL SOON BE SENT DIRECTLY TO FIRMS. EMBOFF PROMISED TO REQUEST LIST FORM USDOC.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: PROVIDE USINT LIST REQUESTED PARA. 5 FOR FORWARDING TO SNCFA.
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